

## **State of the City Address 2017**

### **Seat Pleasant: A SMART City of Excellence**

*State of the City Address*

*"A New Journey Toward a Smart City of Excellence"*

*As Prepared for Delivery*

*Monday, January 30, 2017*

*Seat Pleasant, Maryland*

Mr. President, honored members of the City Council, Madam City Administrator, distinguished guests, citizens and residents of the City of Seat Pleasant, ladies and gentlemen:

Tonight marks my first address of my fourth term as your mayor where I report on the State of the City. It is a great honor for me; especially, as I serve now as the longest tenured Mayor in our 85-year history. Many thanks to you, the voters of Seat Pleasant for your confidence and support of me to serve as your mayor. Since taking office for my first time in 2004, it has been a tumultuous 12 years filled with extreme and unfathomable hostility. Yet we endured and maintained our resolve through and until September 2016. As some may remember, I placed a tent on the lawn of City Hall to become your Mobile Mayor, that I might continue to serve the people, despite the opposition to our cause of a just and balanced government that puts the people's interests first over personal interest.

Now, a new bright, brilliant and bold era has begun in A Smart City of Excellence. Our new City Council has been elected and have immediately restored the faith of the community by balancing the government. The Council, through its Legislative authority, has restored the reins of power back to where it was originally before 1992's drastic and antagonistic change to a ceremonial mayor and a weak executive branch. We now have a government where power is equally shared between the Executive and Legislative Branches of our government. Equity and justice are once again alive and well in the City of Seat Pleasant.

This Council has been hard at work, holding a series of meetings to get our government back on track and to them we say thank you. Working with this Council has

been a tremendous pleasure and the citizens will be very pleased with what we will be able to now accomplish by working together. Where there is unity, there is strength. Where there is strength, along with it comes the power to do all things through Christ who ***strengthens us***. Oh yes, we can say that with faith in our words and praise in our veins. Seat Pleasant, the stone that the builders, the past leaders and the naysayers rejected, has and will continue to be the cornerstone!!!

The journey of a thousand miles, according to the ancient Chinese proverb, begins with the first step. The beginning of a great and worthwhile journey is before us now. To embark on the journey towards your goals and aspirations requires bravery. To remain on that path requires courage. The bridge that merges the two is commitment. Yes, our leaders are brave to chart a new course; we have the courage to maintain that course despite our opposition and because of the love we have for our people, we remain committed to ensuring Excellence in all we do.

We endeavor with faith and determination to march towards our goals believing we will achieve them. With the forcefulness of our integrity and the grace of righteousness ordering our steps, Seat Pleasant is on the path of success that is paved through the blood, sweat and tears already sacrificed over the past few months.

We are proposing some phenomenal initiatives starting with the resources we have. We are investing in plans to ensure that you, the great citizens of Seat Pleasant, receive the blessings of living here and the greatness that we can accomplish. The benefits of our plans and accomplishments will result in good governance, safe streets and sound economic policies that will guide us toward a new frontier.

The heart of our community is our Senior Citizens. We value, cherish and honor them. They have sacrificed so much for Seat Pleasant and because of them we are. We are a bedroom community within the Washington, DC corridor and have been for a

number of years. Twenty-One percent of our population are senior citizens who are living on fixed incomes and many of them have lived in Seat Pleasant for most of their lives. They have been the stalwarts and the giants of our City and we must give back to those that came before us. To reward their faithfulness and steadfastness to the City, in the 2019 budget cycle, I will be proposing an across-the-board tax break and relief for all senior citizens who have lived here for more than 40 years. Our citizens who have remained in the City for lifetimes must be taken care of. When the property values begin to soar as we move into a new age of development, your taxes will not soar with them.

Moving forward, I will talk to you about where we are; and I will devote a lion share of my remarks on the future of our city. This report will provide a framework on how we envision Seat Pleasant over the next 5 to 10 years, and beyond. My administration along with the City Council will lead this city on a journey that will rival even the most dynamic cities in the country. This journey will move us toward being more engaged with our residents and businesses, educating our community and empowering them to make this one of the most enviable small cities that will offer big city services in the world.

Let's talk about our financial picture. For those who rumor that Seat Pleasant is going bankrupt, they are peddling fiction to create hysteria and friction. Their lack of knowledge about basic government financial accounting practices and unwillingness to be educated about the truth leaves them to spread falsehoods and in essence attempts to ruin the successes and accomplishments of our entire government and community.

Seat Pleasant has embarked on a new and vibrant journey towards becoming a much more developed, diverse and smart city. To that end, we are fortunate to have been approved to receive a \$4.1-million-dollar loan from the United States Department of Agriculture to modernize the City Hall and Public Works facilities. This represents the beginning of our Smart City initiative and will lead us into the next decade and show that we are operating ahead of our time.

To the citizens and residents of Seat Pleasant and the surrounding communities, the State of the City, the State of your City, the Smart City of Excellence is STRONG! In essence, the State of the City is as strong as it has ever been in its 86-year history. The facts are our finances are strong, managed well and we have a healthy fund balance that is aiding us in attracting and spurring new revenues and serious interest from the private equity markets. Presently, the overall financial health of the City is strong with positive cash inflows generated. This achievement is attributed largely to good management over revenue collections of real estate, personal property and highway user revenues as well as tight controls over expenditures. Total tax collections for all categories reached **\$2,438,504** by the end of the second quarter. Furthermore, some categories like personal property taxes realized their largest surge in FY17.

In contrast to the revenues, year-to-date expenditures continue to be closely scrutinized in the absence of the spending moratorium placed on the executive team a few years ago. Total expenditures were **\$278,081**, slightly higher than this time last fiscal year due to capital expenditures relating to the Smart City project and the purchase of police vehicles in addition to increased employee staffing levels. It is worth noting, all of the capital expenditures related to the Smart Cities project will be reimbursed back to the City by the Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Loan. Nevertheless, in spite of these planned expenditures, the general fund operating balance still **increased** by **\$175,580**.

These are rapidly changing times in which we live. The world is evolving in ways almost unimaginable. This evolution of change is reshaping how we live, how we work, how we commute, how we communicate and how we shop. This change also has impacts on our health, our environment and the planet in which we live which will force us to change if we are to compete in the regional, national and global economies.

To that end, let's talk about where we are and then talk about the future. Let's talk about them in terms of three questions and how, we as a city, can come together and

advance our city and impact this region economically, creatively, and socially. Tonight, I will share with you how our journey will take us from a small bedroom community to a serious economic powerhouse that will leverage our geography, promote ourselves as a convenient transportation hub of convenience and a community that supports its creative class attracting Millennials, supporting the future Centennials and preserving the dignity of our retiring Baby boomers whom we love.

***First, how do we increase economic activity in the city that provides improved commercial options, better residential opportunities for low-income individuals and families, work force training and job creation?***

To begin answering that question, one step in the journey that has already occurred is that we, as the Mayor, City Council and staff, met with the State of Maryland's Secretary for Housing and Community Development, the Honorable Kenneth Holt, as well as representatives from the Maryland Department of Commerce and the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. Our Acting Director for Economic Development presented the City's marketing package to them for review on December 15, 2016. They expressed tremendous interest in assisting the City with development and revitalization using the Smart City model. A number of meetings have been scheduled in the coming months to allow the Assistant Secretary, the Honorable Carol Gilbert, to tour the City with her team and determine where the development process can begin. There is also discussion of meeting regarding all the programs that are provided by the DHCD that our city could apply for and be seriously considered.

In anticipation of receiving funding, we are grateful to the City Council for passing legislation to create the **Seat Pleasant Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Revolving Loan Fund**. These programs are the first of their kind in the region. We created these programs to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increased

opportunities for lower income families and individuals to access decent and affordable homes. This Trust Fund and Revolving Loan Fund program is a pioneer and model for other municipalities. With well over 100 vacant homes in our community, there is plenty of housing stock to utilize to provide our people with the shelter they so desperately need, while at the same time, avoiding the scourge of blight and deterioration. The Honorable City Council had the foresight to not only create these fund programs, but to capitalize them with an initial investment of \$22,000. For that, we once again thank the Council for their diligence and their ability to work together for the betterment of our City.

Yet there is so much more to be done in this area. Our residents and citizens need decent, affordable and sustainable housing. Therefore, I will be asking the City Council to provide increased funding to the Fund Programs in the next budget so that these goals for our people will be realized.

Furthermore, the Mayor's office has established connections with various investors, who have tentatively committed to raise and invest a minimum of \$125 Million into the Smart City with an Innovation Village undertaking across the City. The investment team will work collaboratively with the City to ensure that their goals are aligned with the goals of the City, including efforts to track data and report on outcomes. Their support and commitment will significantly improve the availability of affordable housing and sustainable economic development in the region. The expansion goals and objectives we have for the community are moving our City towards securing higher-end retail, better quality restaurants and other value added business services that ultimately create better options for our deserving residents.

Over the past several months, my administration has been in a series of meetings with IBM regarding an Intelligent Operations Center project. The world's leader in Smart City programs has been helping our city move toward providing smart city solutions and services to our community. Cognitive computing and its capacity for building citizen engagement will introduce fresh opportunities for our government to improve citizens'

lives and the business environment, deliver personalized experiences, and optimize program and service outcomes. We have undergone plenty of discussion regarding Smart Cities and the Internet of Things, which is key to the progress of our current Smart City efforts.

We are collecting information regarding development and growth in Seat Pleasant as well as networking with other government officials to discover best practices and models. The Smart City model would be reached in a shorter amount of time as we get more grants and secure more investments from the private sector that support the information and communication technology that the City needs. With the work that has already been done we are headed in the right direction to secure several hundred thousand dollars from the government and are aggressively raising \$2.5 - \$5 million from the private sector.

**What are the great and wonderful benefits of becoming a Smart City? They are:**

Recognition as the first Smart City in the State of Maryland, streamlined operation for City services creating a “City for Me”, access to advanced analytics that drive social service breakthroughs, access and use of big data to further decision-making and policy producing objectives, technology that can improve outcomes, optimize service delivery, and strengthen security, safety and resilience, and stimulation of outside investment as businesses race to be the first to put their stamp on the city’s growing economy.

In line with pursuing these benefits, we are instituting a new Smart City Committee, composed of you, the heart of our City, our citizens and residents. The purpose of this Committee is to turn our words of today into the actions of tomorrow. Please see our volunteers after the event so that you may sign up to be our partners and assist us in realizing our great goals!

However, there are those that harbor the belief that Seat Pleasant will never amount to anything. They believe that we won't achieve our goals because they say that our dreams are too big. There are some who believe that this City is not worthy of development. They say, "nobody wants to come to Seat Pleasant. It's not attractive. It's too much crime and those people will never work together to make anything happen." Even in Biblical times, people asked "***can any good thing come out of Nazareth?***" So it is equally true in this time when people ask "***what good thing can come out of Seat Pleasant?***"

Well I say to them, **WATCH WHAT WE DO!!!** Because the God that we believe in can take an acorn and grow a mighty oak tree. This same God placed genius in the mind of a black man named George Washington Carver who took a peanut and created over 300 inventions. Yes, and God guided and directed a black woman named Harriet risking her life and led hundreds of slaves to their freedom. Therefore, I believe with everything in my heart, mind and soul that this same God will direct this Black Mayor and this Black City Council from Seat Pleasant, Maryland to lead our community in becoming the **FIRST SMART CITY OF EXCELLENCE** in this nation!!

These ill-informed people don't know that **YOU** (Seat Pleasant) are more than conquerors and more than overcomers. All your life all you have done is overcome. In your personal journeys, you have endured much. So, let me remind you as scripture has said, "*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" This is our time and God will not withhold anything good from His people if we walk justly in love and mercy and walk humbly with our God.

We are not becoming a Smart City for show; rather we are becoming a Smart City to improve the livelihood of our citizens and residents. The City Council and myself along with our dedicated staff will accomplish our goals. This City will be a Smart City which



means more access to jobs, in particular, good paying jobs and reducing our 16% unemployment rate. We will work toward increasing our annual median income rate of \$47,408. We will work toward reducing our 17% poverty rate. While there are no guarantees, we will live by the famous quote, *“No one knows what changes, big or small lie ahead. One thing is certain, our journey’s not over.”*

Also on this journey we have another priority. We take very seriously in our redevelopment efforts our objective to bring back a quality grocery store into our City. The loss of the Safeway store in Addison Plaza has negatively affected many of our residents, to include the loss of over 70 jobs and over \$140,000 in tax revenue out of our city. We cannot sit back idly as another inner city community is abandoned by those who don’t care about us. As a city, we will stand up for our right to work, our right to better paying and high quality job growth, and our desire to provide healthy fresh food options for all of us.

Better housing, optimal dining options, higher-end shopping and exciting nightlife spots will come here in the form of our next development, the new “Downtown Seat Pleasant,” as we work to create our Innovation Village. Innovation villages facilitate the creation and commercialization of new ideas and support metropolitan economies by growing jobs in ways that leverage their distinct economic attributes. The purpose of the Village is to attract and retain millennials and startup companies in new and exciting ways. These villages build on and revalue the intrinsic qualities of cities: proximity, density, authenticity, and vibrant places.

The Seat Pleasant Innovation Village will offer the following services, to include but not limited to, free Internet access to the community, an Accelerator for purpose-driven companies, and a new entrepreneurship center. Yes, I said it, free Internet access to the community, provided you live, work, stay and/or play within the boundaries of the City of Seat Pleasant. Given the proximity of many Innovation Villages to low-income neighborhoods and the large number of sub-baccalaureate jobs many provide, developing a village in Seat Pleasant can help connect disadvantaged populations to new employment and educational opportunities.

We are blessed with many strategic advantages that can attract the type of development Seat Pleasant is clamoring for. Our location is our greatest asset, as we have two major State highways, Central Avenue and MLK Jr. Highway, and the two Metro stations that are buttress to the City, Addison Road and Capitol Heights. For the business and investor community, Seat Pleasant has obtained tax incentive designations, such as being an Enterprise Zone, a HUBZone, a Revitalization Tax Credit Zone, as well as a Sustainable Community. Seat Pleasant is more than open for business, **we are business and we mean business!!!**

***The second question becomes, how do we keep Seat Pleasant residents, businesses and visitors safe and reduce crime within our city without becoming Big Brother over our citizens?***

This administration is firmly committed to ensuring law and order. We strongly believe that our citizens and residents deserve to live in a tranquil place. Our businesses can rest assured that this is a great environment where their customers can shop without fear, where their employees feel safe and where they can get a handsome return on their investment. It is the nobleness of the profession of a peace officer that makes the art of service the goal of our department. Recently, I have appointed a dynamic Chief of Police who is committed to transforming our police department into a public safety agency that is efficient, effective, data driven, and transparent. It is under those principles we will have a department that is truly committed to the growth of our city and possess the skills, compassions, and work ethic our community deserves.

Under this new administration, we have seen growth in internal morale and accountability. This has led to the reduction of police misconduct complaints, and an increase in our community engagement efforts. For the first time in history, this department is committed to being a real community policing agency. They have

embraced the notion that the community **{You}**, should determine how you want to be policed.

Our Police Department has engaged our community through social platforms such as the “Meet the Chief” and “Coffee with COPS” events, as well as community knock and talks. We have seen a change in our relations with our residents which gives them something to be proud of. Under this new administration, this department has truly become the change that we can believe in. The City Council and I commend our Police Department’s efforts thus far and we look towards a future that is bright and filled with success.

As we approach our goal of becoming a smart city, our public safety department must be smarter to provide a safer community. I am happy to report that our Police Department has begun the task to forge working partnerships with our federal, state, and local Public Safety partners. These partnerships will allow us to tap into more resources, secure better resources and improve communications that will ultimately help make our city a safe and peaceful city.

Working with our partners using smart solutions is key to our crime suppression and ultimate elimination efforts. The use of crime mapping has aided our ability to educate our residents and businesses on crime trends and engage them with community alerts showing how to safely protect themselves and their assets. We are able to expound upon this using saturation patrols which target crime hotspots and place officers in specific corridors and commercial areas. During times of saturation, our officers are able to identify issues facing particular areas by engaging those who are causing the problems as well as empowering other residents to report and remain vigilant of other occurrences.

***Education, Empowerment and Engagement*** are key in reducing repeat calls for service. Before officers clear calls, we are educating residents and visitors on services available to them such as family counseling, how to obtain peace and protective orders, and other available resources. We continue our educational opportunities through conducting victim follow-ups, days after calls for service and empowering the resident or business on what is the next step. This use of Smart solutions will help us address crime related and crime prevention methods faster, better and more efficiently.

***The third question is how do we make Smart City applications work to our advantage locally, regionally, nationally and internationally?***

The world is changing and thus communities around us are changing; some more rapidly than others. However, this change is not coming as a result of inevitability but deliberate choices made by those leaders and their constituents and stakeholders who dare to collectively think and perform brighter, bigger and bolder. These cities are thinking beyond just today but into the next century and how citizen engagement can be enhanced; service delivery can be improved with access to the utilization of real-time open data and with taxpayer dollars being saved, leveraged and conserved. Conversely, those communities who refuse to change will be left behind.

With over half of the world's population living in cities according to the United Nations, that number is expected to reach 66% by 2050. This increase, along with the rising numbers in world populations as a whole, will cause tremendous burdens on cities in the delivery of basic services, and in building and improving on infrastructure and managing shrinking budgets. I am pleased to report that I have been invited to present our Smart City Model to the United Nations and the world.

In response, more cities are becoming “Smart” with the advent of “Smart” technologies and the IoT. For instance, Chicago is using Array of Things. Dublin is using CityWatch. For Chicago, The Array of Things (AoT) is an urban sensing project, a network of interactive, modular sensor boxes that will be installed around Chicago to collect real-time data on the city’s environment, infrastructure, and activity for research and public use. For Dublin, they are exploring how citizen-contributed sensor data in combination with data from sensors deployed by municipalities and utilities can be used to make cities sustainable and connected.

For many of our residents, they are asking, ***what is Smart Cities?*** Simply put, Smart Cities are connected cities. They are connected to better communicate on multiple levels utilizing the Internet of Things (IoT) for the purpose of producing both structured and unstructured big data made open and available to government officials, residents, businesses and academia. This open big data is then used for creating analytics that help government leaders make better and faster decisions that are both efficient and effective.

On May 9, 2016, the Seat Pleasant City Council passed Resolution 16-12 to designate the City as a “Smart City” with an “Innovation Village.” The Smarter City initiative for Seat Pleasant will employ cloud-based “internet of things” (IoT) and cognitive computing capabilities that collect Big Data and are affordable by Small Town USA, where 80% of Americans live.

Therefore, Seat Pleasant will offer Smart City services that are better, faster and more personalized making it a “City for me,” using information and communication technology with the internet of things. Let’s break that definition down. This means that we will be better at delivering services to our citizens and faster in keeping pace with an ever changing world and that is tailored specifically to the needs of our constituents. We will use the latest in scientific advancements using information and communication technology.

With that understanding, you may want to know specifically why should we become a Smart City? It is widely known that cities across America must prepare their economic vision or revenue expectations without or with very limited support of the federal government. Additionally, cities around the world must do the same. With shrinking budgets, volatile economies, and the pull-back of national government assistance, municipalities must find ways in which to stream-line processes, establish better financial controls and become creative in capitalizing infrastructure projects. This can be done through Smart City operations using open data.

So, imagine Seat Pleasant as a Smart City of Competence having the ability to erect nodes that will measure temperature, barometric pressure, light, vibration, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, ozone, ambient sound intensity, pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and surface temperature. This in essence would be like a “Fitness Tracker” for the city.

Potential applications of data collected by this City-styled “Fitness Tracker” include:

- Sensors monitoring air quality, sound and vibration (to detect heavy vehicle traffic), and temperature can be used to suggest the healthiest and unhealthiest walking times and routes through the city, or to study the relationship between diseases and the urban environment.
- Real-time detection of urban flooding can improve city services and infrastructure to prevent property damage and illness.
- Measurements of micro-climate in different areas of the city, so that residents can get up-to-date, high-resolution "block-by-block" weather and climate information.
- Observe which areas of the city are heavily populated by pedestrians at different times of day to suggest safe and efficient routes for walking late at night or for timing traffic lights during peak traffic hours to improve pedestrian safety and reduce congestion-related pollution.

This urban-scale “instrument” will enable the City, urban planners, residents, and researchers to monitor and examine Seat Pleasant’s environment, infrastructure and activity, including detecting trends and changes over time. Ultimately, the goal is to measure the city in sufficient detail to provide data to help engineers, scientists, policymakers and residents in working together to make Seat Pleasant healthier, more livable and more efficient.

Additionally, a Smart City is not limited to the above. As the first Smart City in Maryland, Seat Pleasant envisions providing virtual parking assistance that guides users to a geographically ideal and available spot. We will provide data about light, water and soil conditions to groups that adopt community gardens. A Public Engagement solution will be provided that will equip city officials with vital information needed to make better development decisions. The visually impaired will be assisted in navigating city streets so that every single resident is safe within our borders.

Moreover, creating a safe community is the principal responsibility of city leaders. Using the IoT, we will be deploying throughout the city solutions that will be connected to our Intelligent Operations Center (IOC). This technology will include solutions like ShotSpotter that can monitor and detect a gunshot location immediately, sending real-time notification to our public safety officials.

Likewise, ubiquitous video streaming will be launched as well to aid law enforcement professionals in the detection, suppression and prevention of crime. Technological solutions such as Genetec’s IP video management software have capabilities that provide video surveillance, access control and automatic license plate recognition. As a Smart City the deployment of such technology will help city leaders and stakeholders play an effective role in keeping cities safer while minimizing investigation costs and cost-effectively gathering visual evidence.

There is a myriad of solutions that will be used in Seat Pleasant as we expand our footprint becoming a more intrinsic Smart City. Just so you are clear, **free Public Wi-Fi will be provided for residents, businesses and visitors**. Additionally, city officials will be enabled to provide location-based services.

For all that Seat Pleasant has endured over the years, for all the grit and hard work that has been required, for the over 30 years that we've been marginalized, where we have had investments diverted, where we have been the true forgotten men and women of this country, where we have been thought of last, now is our time. We have everything we need to do for ourselves and we invite our County partners, our State partners, our Federal partners and our private partners to join our self-directed movement of change toward becoming a Smart City of Excellence.

The journey ahead will be long, but we are ready. The journey will have bumps, holes, curves, blocks and detours. It is the external conditions that will cause our journey to be slippery at times, cold some days (like today) and hot on other days. There will be those who will try to thwart our efforts, create road blocks and slow down our momentum.

Yet, through it all we have faith that we will not walk this journey alone. There is a universal force that is greater than any force or any power in the world which lies within us. We are determined to pace ourselves in this journey because we know that the race is not given to the swift, neither the battle to the strong, but to those that endure to the end. Yes, we most certainly have that enduring spirit.

As I close and reach the end of this address, I want you to know that each step forward will get us closer to the promised land. For eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, neither has it entered into the hearts of men what God has in store for those that love



Him. And so Seat Pleasant has waited for over 30 years for a blessing, for a good thing. Seat Pleasant has waited over 30 years for true development, safe streets, and a progressive thoughtful, and meaningful movement that will bring our City out of the Stone Ages and into a new land of prosperity, the likes of which we have never even contemplated.

Therefore, we will not be deterred. We are determined. God is on our side because no weapon that is formed against us will prosper. We are closing the gap between Seat Pleasant and the other cities and towns in the region. We are focusing all of our efforts and talents towards the new day that is upon us. Yes, we are living in a new day, at a new time, with a new spirit that will reach far beyond us; it will be a proud legacy that we can pass on to our children.

May God's abundant and bountiful grace rest upon us all. God bless you and God bless the City of Seat Pleasant, a Smart City of Excellence!

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